AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of searching for data to be retrieved from a distributed computer system connected over a communications network, the method comprising:

initiating a search communication session at a user end terminal;

generating a search request comprising at least one search criterion and a permanent user identifier which can be mapped to an address in the distributed computer system at asaid user end terminal, ~~the search request comprising search criteria and a permanent user identifier which can be mapped to an address in the distributed computer system, wherein the search criteria comprise information entered at the end terminal by a user and additional information automatically added to the entered information, the additional information being associated with the user identifier~~in said search communications session;

modifying the search request at a user end terminal to indicate at least one user preference;

forwarding the search request to a proxy ~~terminal arranged to forward the search request to a data source capable of retrieving data satisfying the search request from the distributed computer system, and~~ server using automatic speech generation means to convert the search request to a suitable spoken version to query a data source addressed by a telephone number;

forwarding the spoken version of the search request to said data source by phoning said telephone number;

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speaking the search request as a telephone query using automated speech technology;

generating a search result message comprising an audio file recording the answer given to the query;

conveying the search result message to the proxy server, whereby data satisfying the search request is retrievable from the distributed computer system by the user;

providing the search result to a user end terminal selected in accordance with one or more user preferences after the initial search session has terminated;

wherein additional information is included in the search request which is obtained either automatically or on request by the user's terminal or by the proxy server administering the search.

2.   (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the search results returned by the data source include information specific to the entity generating the search request.

3.   (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the search results returned by the data source include information specific to an entity to whom the at least one search criterion relate.

4.   (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein one of said user preferences includes a criterion defining the extent to which a search result must conform to the search request before a search result can be communicated to a user end terminal.

5.   (Original) A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the search result is forwarded by the data source to the proxy server, and the user preference includes a criterion to indicate that if a search result conforms sufficiently to the search request, then

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the search result is to be communicated by the proxy server to a predetermined user end terminal.

6.   (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the search request ~~indicates~~includes a priority indicator, and said user preference includes a criterion to indicate that if a search result is received with said priority indicator then the search result is to be communicated by the proxy server to a predetermined user end terminal.

7.   (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the search result ~~indicates~~includes a user-requested search content indicator, and said user preference includes a criterion to indicate that if a search result is received with said user-requested search content indicator, then the search result is to be communicated by the proxy server to a predetermined user end terminal.

8.   (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the user-requested search content indicator is assigned by the proxy server to indicate a type of file.

9.   (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the user-requested search content indicator is assigned by the proxy server to indicate a subject content of a file.

10.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the predetermined user end terminal is the user end terminal which the user is associated with at the time the proxy server receives the search result.

11-13. Cancelled.

14.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, in which the search result is provided in a medium and format suitable for the data terminal to which the search result is to be forwarded.

15-19. Cancelled.

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20.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the user end terminal is a mobile device.

21.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least one user preference comprises a formatting user preference which indicates how the search result should be formatted.

22.   Cancelled.

23.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of the proxy server modifying at least one search criterion in accordance to at least one user preference.

24.   (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim ~~1~~21, wherein the method further comprises the step of the proxy server modifying the search result according to at least one user preference.

25.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the at least one data source to which said search is forwarded to by the proxy server is determined by the proxy server in accordance with at least one user preference.

26.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the proxy server processes the returned search result to remove at least one result which is indicated by at least one user preference as not relevant to the user's listed interests.

27.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the proxy server processes the returned search result to modify any returned cost value for an item or service indicated by the search result, the modification being according to a discount scheme associated with a user preference.

28.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the proxy server processes the search result to prioritise the delivery of at least one item listed by

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the search result to the user in accordance with number of search criteria said at least one item conforms with.

29.   Cancelled.

30.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the search request is generated by the user end terminal modifying a previously stored search request in accordance with at least one updated search criterion.

31.   (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the set of at least one user preferences specifies a maximum time limit for the search results to be generated.

32.   Cancelled.

33.   (Previously Presented) A user end terminal arranged to be operable by a user for use in generating a search request using the method of claim 1.

34.   (Currently Amended) A proxy server arranged to receive a search request message from a user end terminal arranged to be operable by a user for use in generating a search request, the proxy server being arranged to be used in a method according to claim 1.

35.   (Currently Amended) A tangible medium containing a suite of computer programs arranged to implement a method according to claim 1, the suite of computers being provided on the distributed computer system.

36.   (Previously Presented) A signal carrying a search request generated by a method according to claim 1 over a communications network, the communications network comprising the distributed computer system.

37.   (Currently Amended) A communications network arranged to communicate a signal carrying a search result generated by a method according to claim

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~~136 over a communications network, the communications network comprising the~~
~~distributed computer system.~~

38-45. Cancelled.

46.   (New) A method of searching for data as in claim 1, wherein the telephone number addressed comprises an E164 address.

47.   (New) A method of searching for data as in claim 1, wherein said proxy server is a SIP proxy server and wherein software of said end terminal and said proxy server are arranged to modify a specific search expression so that any results for information which are generated by the proxy server automatically have an appropriate format for the destination to which the search request message is to be forwarded to.

48.   (New) A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

storing the answer to the search query as an audio file;

and

converting the audio file using speech to text technology.

49.   (New) A method as in claim 1, wherein said telephone number is addressed via an IP-PSTN gateway, and the proxy server forwards the search request by phoning up the telephone number and speaking the search request using automated speech technology.

50.   (New) A method as in claim 1, wherein in said step of generating the search request at the end user terminal, a suitable application is used to generate from a spoken search request the text comprising the search request.

51.   (New) A method as in claim 1 wherein the proxy server is a SIP proxy server which modifies at least one search result or generates another form of notification to alert the user to the search result and to indicate to the user how the user may retrieve the search result.

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52. (New) A method as in claim 1 further comprising the data source requesting additional information from the proxy server which enables the data source to provide additional information specific to an entity to which the search criteria relate.

53. (New) A method as in claim 52 wherein the server is a SIP proxy server and in which the addition information is provided the SIP proxy server.

54. (New) A method as in claim 53 in which the SIP server is authorized to retrieve the additional information from a data source by the user.

55. (New) A method as in claim 54 in which the additional information is provided to the requesting data source without the user being aware of the content of the additional information provided.

56. (New) A method as in claim 52 in which the additional information is provided only if the data source requesting it conforms with predetermined security criteria for receiving the additional information requested.

57. (New) A system for searching for data to be retrieved from a distributed computer system connected over a communications network, the system comprising:

means for initiating a search communications session at a user end terminal;

means for generating a search request comprising at least one search criterion and a permanent user identifier which can be mapped to an address in the distributed computer system at said user end terminal in said search communications session;

modifying the search request at a user end terminal to indicate at least one user preference;

means for forwarding the search request to a proxy server,

means for using automatic speech generation means to convert the search request to a suitable spoken version to query a data source addressed by a telephone number;

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means for forwarding the spoken version of the search request to said data source by phoning said telephone number;

means for speaking the search request as a telephone query using automated speech technology;

means for generating a search result message comprising an audio file recording the answer given to the query;

means for conveying the search result message to the proxy server, whereby data satisfying the search request is retrievable from the distributed computer system by the user; providing the search result to a user end terminal selected in accordance with one or more user preferences after the initial search session has terminated,

wherein additional information is included in the search request which is obtained either automatically or on request by the user's terminal or by the proxy server administering the search.

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